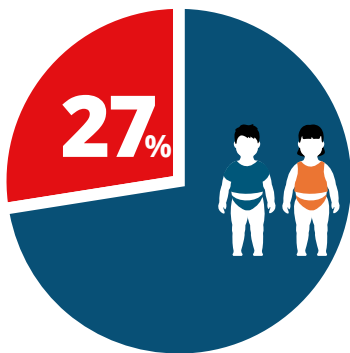




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**Thirsty?**  
Choose Water!

The Australian government collaborated with CIVIQ to promote the water consumption in schools and encourage the replacement of sugary drinks to benefit students' health. CIVIQ, the main distributor of Elkay in this country, participates in the program "Thirsty? Choose Water!" which has been carried out in schools since 2017.



**In Australia, 27.4% of children ages 5 to 17 are overweight, making them more likely to suffer from chronic diseases and become obese adults.**

One factor contributing to this is the consumption of sugary drinks. Adolescents are regular consumers of these beverages (60% of 12- to 15-year-olds do so regularly, compared to 36.4% of children ages 5 to 11).

**For this and other reasons, it's essential to offer quality water to students.**

**The "Thirsty? Choose Water!" Program was developed for these reasons, and it is the first of its kind in Australia.** It was led by the Central Coast Local Health District (CCLHD) of the New South Wales Ministry of Health (NSW Health) and carried out in partnership with five New South Wales local health districts and 85 schools.

**These centers adopted a comprehensive approach to promoting water among the student's community, teachers, and parents.** To achieve this, activities were implemented within classrooms, **Elkay ezH2O® Bottle Filling Stations were installed**, and promotional activities were created within schools, including school newsletters, social media content, posters, information graphics on bathroom doors, and flip charts in the dining room.

**The key messages for teachers around on water and sugary drinks were delivered face-to-face at workshops.** They were awarded with accreditation points from the National Education Standards Authority for attending with a kit containing lessons, learning activities (videos, a student drinking water challenge and water bottles), and access to the website for PowerPoint presentations.

**To emphasize the importance of consuming water on a daily basis among parents, information was made available about its benefits, including a virtual calculator that makes it possible to know how much money is being spent on sugary drinks for various periods of time.**

**Not consuming enough water can negatively affect students' physical and mental health, including lack of attention and coordination.**

Among the most common symptoms of dehydration are:



- Headaches



- Dry mouth



- Low concentration



- Constipation



- Thirst



- Lethargy



- Chapped lips



- Dark urine



**According to the Institute of Medicine, children and teenagers should consume between 1.7 and 3.3 liters per day**, depending on age, size, and sex, so it is important that schools have the necessary units to meet students' water demand.

## INCREASING WATER AWARENESS

To carry out the study in 85 selected schools in New South Wales, they were randomly assigned a Behavioral Intervention (BI), a Chilled Water Station (CWS) intervention, or neither of them (control group).

The Behavioral Intervention was carried out through classroom lessons, promotion, and vaccination clinics, whereas CWS interventions included a chilled water dispenser installation.

During the study, surveys with students identified changes in the behavior of carrying and filling water bottles, and using water fountains (as shown in Table 1). At a baseline, **more than 75% of students in both study groups carried a water bottle to school, although less than 70% reported refilling their bottle at their educational institution.**

The CWS intervention group showed some remarkably significant changes from T1 to T3, with an increasing proportion of students bringing their water bottle to school and filling it there.

Meanwhile, a significant change was observed in terms of taking their bottle to school in the control group, however no change was observed in the proportion of students filling their bottle at their academic institution.



**Table 1. Student-level data: water bottle carrying, filling, and tap use.**

	Group 2: Intervention CWS (Chilled Water Station)				Group 4: Control			
	Baseline (T1) n = 1693 (%)	Post (T2) n = 1433 (%)	Follow-up (T3) n = 1355 (%)	P values Par 1 T1-T2 Par 2 T1-T3	Baseline (T1) n = 1631 (%)	Post (T2) n = 1494 (%)	Follow-up (T3) n = 1342 (%)	P values Par 1 T1-T2 Par 2 T1-T3
Carries water bottle								
Never/not often	317 (19.70)	255 (18.71)	201 (15.52)	ns s	332 (21.08)	324 (22.59)	223 (17.27)	ns s
Every day/mostly	1292 (80.30)	1108 (81.29)	1094 (84.48)		1243 (78.92)	1110 (77.41)	1068 (82.73)	
Fills water bottle at school								
Never	434 (35.93)	173 (34.19)	134 (29.78)	ns s	384 (31.50)	370 (32.92)	320 (35.13)	ns ns
Yes	774 (64.07)	333 (65.81)	316 (70.22)		835 (68.50)	754 (67.08)	591 (64.87)	
Drinks from school Bubbler								
Never	833 (51.67)	718 (52.52)	727 (56.14)	ns s	845 (53.14) 8	801 (55.74)	698 (54.19)	ns ns
Yes	779 (48.33)	649 (47.48)	568 (43.86)		745 (46.86)	636 (44.26)	590 (45.81)	

Note: n = total number of survey completers –note missing data due to incomplete responses for some variables; ns, not significant; s significant finding, denotes P value < .05.

On the other hand, Table 2 shows strategies used by schools to promote water, with the excursion notes being the most significant. **It also highlights that 86% of school staff survey reported that CWS was well received by students.** Among students, bottle filling stations stand out: there were often lines after the bell rang with students refilling their water bottles.

Water promotion activity	Table 2 Group 2: Intervention CWS			Group 4: Control		
	Baseline (T1) n = 15 (%)	Follow-up (T3) n = 14 (%)	P values	Baseline (T1) n = 12 (%)	Follow-up (T3) n = 12 (%)	P values
Excursion notes	8 (57.14)	10 (71.12)	ns	4 (33.33)	10 (83.33)	S
Water on desks	4 (28.57)	9 (64.28)	ns	2 (16.66)	5 (41.66)	Ns
Promoted in sport	10 (71.12)	11 (78.57)	ns	4 (33.33)	7 (58.33)	Ns

Note: ns, not significant; s, significant finding, denotes P value < .05.

## It is worth mentioning that Thirsty? Choose Water! was initially financed by a grant program from NSW Health to work with schools in three health districts: Central Coast, Illawarra Shoalhaven, and Southwest Sydney.

Once the research was completed in these areas, the program was expanded to schools in two other NSW health districts: Mid North Coast and Hunter New England. Australian Government Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) supported this second research phase.



**These strategies were found to increase water consumption among students and encourage the replacement of sugary drinks. The study also adds that improving in access to safe water in schools may help reduce obesity among children and adolescents.**

## EZH2O UNITS

To provide quality water to students, **Elkay designed an ezH2O® Bottle Filling Station made from vandal resistant material, for a strong and a durable option.** This unit offers chilled water and features a wall mount design for outdoor or indoor installations within school facilities.



The ezH2O unit is activated via a 20 second automatic shut-off timer button and features “Green Ticker” technology, which indicates how many 600 ml PET plastic bottles were saved from being used.

This helps reduce students’ dependency on sugary drinks and bottled water while offering water anytime after physical activity, at lunch, or whenever necessary.



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